

The End Of An Empire

by fearthedawn

Category: Halo

Genre: Adventure, Horror

Language: English

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2006-06-09 22:51:24

Updated: 2006-06-09 22:51:24

Packaged: 2016-04-27 00:04:05

Rating: T

Chapters: 2

Words: 6,489

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: Story of the Forerunner living on the first Halo long before humans discovered it. This is my first story here, so enjoy. It cuts off suddenly, but the next part will come later

1. Chapter 1

Hey! This is my first story i've submitted here, so i hope you enjoy it. I had a ton of fun writing this. Also, The Forerunner in this story are how I envision them : Big, wingless lizard-dragon things. Your opinion might differ, but read anyway! you'll like it, I promise. Enjoy,

-fearthedawn

Warning klaxons sounded all across the compound as I watched massive, armored figures hefting short, snub-nosed cannons forming a battle line. I took my place in the line after hastily donning my powered armor in the barracks. The warning had come moments after the traditional Evening's Feast had begun.

"Warning, containment failure in Sector Bykri. All units respond immediately" sounded 342 Guilty Spark, our installation's command module.

As I gazed out from behind my combat visor, I could see the frightened eyes of my blood brothers. I tensed my grip on my phase shifter and loaded a clip of hunter-killer slugs.

"Warning, containment failure in Sector Bykri. All units respond immediately"

The giant doors in front of us shifted to code green and began to slide open. All weapons instantly trained on the growing gap in all that was keeping our installation from becoming tainted with the seed of our mortal enemy.

The doors opened further.

Several of our automated defense units, the Sentinels drifted down and hovered nearer to the gap.

The gate gave a monstrous shudder and exploded outward, sending sparks and chunks of alloyed metal toward us

The doors were open, and Hell flowed out to meet us.

Tens of them, hundreds, thousands of them came out of that void, every single one a slaving beast of killing and destruction. There came a wave of the little infectious ones, then the hideously perverted forms of our fallen comrades, taken over and zombified to serve the Swarm.

The Flood was upon us.

The infection forms looked like tiny fluid-filled sacs, suspended and propelled by long tentacles of every size. They came like a carpet and could possess the bodies of any fallen organism to better suit the flood.

The Zombie Brothers, or Warrior Forms as we called them, stood eight feet tall. They were the bodies of our kind, changed and mutated. All of them had light grey flesh stained green with Flood-fluid, and the arms were thing and long, ending with seven wicked talons. The once proud reptilian faces of our brothers were now twisted into dark replicas. The only emotion on those faces was one of hatred.

A volley of our 'Shifter cannons obliterated the front lines of the infection forms, but more came out from those doors.

I triggered my 'Shifter, shooting a full clip of the glowing blue slugs into the oncoming horde. The infectious ones popped apart like wet balloons, making the floor slick with Flood ichor.

Sentinels shot their laser beams into the Flood, melting five of the warrior forms. The dark tunnel we were in glowed red and blue with our advanced weaponry.

My friend U-Nak sent me a message through our helmet audio receptors.

"This is hopeless, Tr-Ask! There are too many to fight back this time!" U-Nak was a containment veteran like me. We had fought many battles together, and seen many of our friends die and be reborn to the Flood.

I tried to reply, but was cut off as about twenty warrior forms leapt the remaining 15 yards to our battle line. They came down with talons and teeth bared, eager to devour our

flesh.

My 'Shifter hissed, sending forth a volley of shots that melted the head and arms off of two of the descending warriors. A second stream severed one at the waist with a damp SSRRSSHHHHHT noise.

The remainders landed and thrashed wildly with their claws. Sentinel

beams descended and carbonized four, but one of the warriors sighted me and threw itself forward. I fired my 'Shifter and blew off his head in a spray of gore, but two more surged past his falling form with claws bared.

A final stream of hunter-killer slugs sprayed both the warriors, but both still came forward leaking blood and ichor. I stumbled backward and tripped over one of my fallen brothers, his severed arm lying in a pool of blood nearby.

U-Nak noticed that I was in trouble and with a roar he fired his weapon over my head. One of the warriors fell apart. I reloaded my weapon and frantically triggered the 'Shifter as the warrior's talons scythed toward me. The Flood drew back, brandishing its arm now missing a hand. I took advantage of the lapse in the warrior's assault, and got back to my feet, firing my cannon as I did so. The warrior's chest tore apart, exposing rotting bones and the single Infection form lodged inside.

Another burst killed the monster, and it slumped to the ground.

"Tr-Ask! Help!" grunted U-Nak in my receptor. I whirled around to see U-Nak struggling with some infection forms and a warrior. As I watched, U-Nak's Phase Shifter flashed blue and blew apart nine of the infection forms attempting to crawl inside his chest. His concentration was on the tiny forms all around him, and not on the charging warrior.

I took aim and dropped the Flood right before its talons tore apart my friend. He raised his massive gauntlet in the three-fingered salute of our kind, and then turned his attention back to the rest of the battle.

An exploding sentinel lit up the tunnel briefly as it exploded in an orb of orange and red.

All around us, our brothers were dying. U-Nak's squad as well as mine was forcing the Flood into a retreat, but the other squads were not as lucky. The tunnel was filled with the Zap-Spit sounds of our Phase Shifters as well as the death roars of my brothers. The Flood make no sounds.

I blew apart another three warrior forms and stepped forward, ready to destroy more of the flood, but just as quickly as the flood had come, they were gone. I glanced around the now silent tunnel and took in my battle-weary comrades. I let loose a roar of triumph, and the others followed suit.

Together, we are invincible. We are strong.

We Are The Forerunner.

ONE

A total of seven Forerunner containment troopers died that battle, bringing our already weary battle squad down to a total of ten members. U-Nak's face was one of sadness as we loaded the seven lifeless bodies onto the cremation disk.

"These Flood do not even afford our warriors the burial they rightly deserve" he growled.

It was true. The risk of a lone infection form getting into the Ritual-Graves was too disastrous to even think about, so we were forced to cremate our fallen zealots.

After the cremation ceremony, I met U-Nak in the hall outside.

"U-Nak. The Adjucator has called a meeting for all containment leaders." I said, but in a low voice. The Adjucator's meetings usually held bad tidings, and I did not mean to unsettle the troopers. They were demoralized enough as it was.

He glanced around before looking at me. "All right" he said. "Let's get this over with"

The Adjucator's council room was large and dark, lit only by dim lights under the transparent floor. As U-Nak, myself and the other squad leaders stepped inside, the Adjucator looked up from his Holo-communicator, with which he was having an animated conversation.

"No, Ch-Rsh! I forbid you from carrying out that plan! It's too dangerous, and we must-"

He noticed us for the first time, then looked back at the Holo-pad. "My apologies, but I have pressing business. Do not interrupt me again." He pressed a button on the communicator with one slender talon and then addressed us.

"Ah, Executor Tr-Ask. I trust my message found you in good health?"

I nodded, and then said, " Yes, Adjucator, but I worry for the rest of my squad. The Flood have become more determined to escape containment, and my troopers cannot face many more battles without some rest."

The Adjucator nodded grimly. "Yes, the Flood have had a spike in activity lately. They have attempted to escape Sector Bykri five times in the last teracycle. And it is about the Flood that I wish to talk to you about. This installation has become too dangerous to remain on."

This comment cause many hushed murmurings among the council members seated around the cavern, and with the rest of the squad leaders. The Adjucator looked disgusted as he said, "Silence! I will not tolerate dissension in the council. This Installation will be the doom of us if we remain! Even the Plan Five will fail if we do notâ€"

The Council doors burst inward with a dull THUD. Kai Ch-Rsh II strode into the Council room, a furious expression on his dragon-like face.

"Adjucator! This is madness! How dare you even suggest that we leave our ancestral home!"

"SILENCE!"

The Adjucator's fist slammed on his throne chair, sending booming echoes across the entire room.

" Even if you are my son and grand Kai, I will not suffer to be addressed like that!"

Ch-Rsh fell to his knees. " Forgive me, Father, I forget myself in this rage." He said, anger still in his voice.

The Adjucator composed himself. "As I said," he continued, "This installation is too dangerous to be let loose among the galaxy. We must retreat now, before we loose any more valiant warriors or any more ground." As Ch-Rsh began to speak again, The Adjucator roared, "Our ancestral home be damned! I will not, shall not allow the Flood to consume more of us! As it stands now, it is only a matter of time before the Flood escape their prison! And where will we be then?"

Silence echoed across the chamber. Ch-Rsh stood, and in a low voice addressed the council. "I have nothing to say to this heresy. Those of you still loyal to your Grand Kai will stand by me, those who do not will be considered traitors to the great race of the Forerunner, and will be dealt with accordingly."

He strode out of the chamber, his gleaming blood-red power armor making faint hissing noises as he did so. The Adjucator watched him go with sadness on his lizardlike face.

TWO

Later, U-Nak and I sat in the commons area of the Grand Citadel, where the Grand Khai and Adjucator resided. Politics of the Forerunner are very complicated and drawn out, and the council was often full of political intrigue and guile. To avoid giving all of the political power to just one individual, the duties were instead split. The Adjucator was in control of internal affairs and held most of the decision making powers, but the Grand Kai held all of the military might. As Containment Zealots, U-Nak and I took orders directly from the Grand Kai.

The Adjucator was scheduled to give his speech to the general public living in the Grand Citadel in just one teracycle. The Grand Citadel was the last bastion of Forerunner might on this installation, called Ring 343. All of the Forerunner civilians lived here. U-Nak and I were also scheduled to be there as part of the Honor Guard protecting the Adjucator.

"So what do you think of all this, Tr-ask?" said U-Nak with curiosity in his voice.

I shook my head. " I don't know. This strife between the Kai and Adjucator has gone far too long. Ever since the Flood became active in the depths of this ringâ€¦| "

U-Nak continued to munch his standard-issue nutrient bar. " Yeah, everything has gone to hell since then. Do you think the Kai actually meantâ€¦|?" he left the words floating in the air.

"The Kai's temper is renowned, but I doubt he would actually declare

war on the Adjucator. Inner strife within our race has been nearly unheard of for at least a trecacycle." I said, but without much confidence.

U-Nak nodded and packed away his meal. " I hope so, friend."

I watched him walk toward the barracks.

THREE

Half a teracycle later, I was donning the Honor Guard armor I was required to wear for the ceremony and speech afterwards with another of my Zealot squad, Ge-Mos. Ge-Mos was a battle-hardened veteran who was at least a decacycle older than I. He refused to tell anyone his real age. I had watched him personally take down a horde of Warrior forms by himself just to save me.

"This armor's just a little too fancy for me," I complained, looking at the intricate golden swirls and age-worn breastplate. I missed my own matte-grey armor.

Ge-Mos grunted, and then grinned as he hefted the helmet. It was a full-face helm, but had a pair of swooping luminescent wings attached to the top. Tradition dictated that we wore them during the Adjucator's speeches.

There were eight of us, the Honor Guard. Eight was the Adjucator's number, and deemed The Number Of Peace because of that. Three was the Kai's number, and deemed the Number Of War.

The ceremony was just beginning as eight of my squad, dressed in this ridiculous armor, strode out onto the stage holding the ceremonial phase-swords. As I stepped out, someone bumped into me. I stumbled a little and looked around for the offender, but he was gone

Already on the stage, standing in a triangle in front of the pedestal on which the adjucator was on, were the three Hellguards, as we called them. They were the Kai's honor guard. They held sparking phase-spears.

Looking out from the stage, I could see the Grand Amphitheater in its entirety. Looking back at the stage were at least five thousand Forerunner civilians. The Amphitheater was enormous, and could hold at least seven thousand Forerunner in it. Hovering over the seething mass of civilians was a large cube with a Holo-screen on every side, which showed the stage close-up for those who were seated very far away.

The Adjucator waved them into silence. Gradually, the roar of the crowd died to a murmur.

I glanced around. The lights illuminating the stage were extremely bright, and I had to squint out from behind my darkened visor to see anything.

The Adjucator began to speak, but slowly, it seemed to me.

"Greetings, citizens of the Grand Citadel!" A cheer rose up at this, but died quickly.

I looked around. Maybe it was just the lights and uncomfortable armor getting to me.

"I have called you all here today to speak of a very grave matter." The crowd waited, expectant.

I flexed my gloved hand. Something here was very, very wrong.

"As you know," his voice boomed out, amplified by a special machine hidden in his throat, "The organisms known as the Flood have had an extreme spike in activity in the past cycles."

What was that, up on the holo-cube above the crowd? A tech worker? I strained to see, without calling attention to myself.

"Many of our brave warriors have fought and died in the containment tunnels, in an effort to keep this citadel safe."

His voice was like a gong booming out in the darkness of my mind. I tried to see straight through the heat on the stage.

"Unfortunately, their efforts may have been in vain." The crowd muttered uneasily at this.

I saw movement up on the holo-cube. A figure? Or two? It was hard to make out. I squinted harder and strained to see.

"We have but one option, citizens."

Time slowed down.

The Adjucator's voice rang slowly throughout the Amphitheater.

"And that optionâ€¦"

I saw a glint of the visor.

"Isâ€¦."

I saw the metallic sheen of the phase sniper.

"â€¦A serious oneâ€¦"

I broke out of the line the eight of us were in. I ran towards the pedestal with the Adjucator.

In the brightly lit stage, I could see everything.

The faces of my squad, confused.

The blood-red helmets of the Hellgaurds.

The annoyed expressions of the Adjucator's aides.

The Adjucator's voice rang out for the last time. I had to stopâ€¦

"Plan Fiveâ€¦what? What'sâ€¦"

The phase sniper flashed from the holo cube. I was too late.

The Adjucator's head exploded in a spray of gore and brain matter, landing all over the stage.

Time flowed normally once again. In a flash of color and sound, I saw Ge-Mos's gauntlet swing around and connect with the side of my head. I blacked out.

FOUR

I awoke to U-Nak and Ge-Mos's concerned faces. I started and almost shouted. "Where's the Adjucator! I tried toâ€"

Ge-mos pushed me back into the infirmary bed. "The Adjucator is dead, Tr-Ask."

My head was pounding. I could feel a lump on the side of it. " I remember you hitting me, Ge-Mos." I said, my vision swimming.

Ge-Mos swished his stump of a tail. He looked embarrassed. "And here comes the tricky part. You see, many people, including the Adjucator's aides, believe you to be the killer."

The killer.

I didn't say anything. I let the word wash over me.

The killer.

"Wâ€| why? I don't understand at all."

" We found this on your body after Ge-Mos hit you." U-Nak said sadly. He tossed something glinting and metallic onto the infirmary bed.

It was a Lockgun.

Lockguns were nasty things, officially outlawed in the military but there was a plethora of black markets that sell them. Lockguns fire metallic slugs with a Plasma Grenade inside. Forerunner considered them primitive things, as Plasma weapons were considered an old and useless technology, but they were effective at killing things, and killing them as messily as possible.

It was then I realized my hands were shackled to the bed.

"Am I a prisoner? Why am I shackled?" I demanded. My head was hurting and I needed answers. " I have done nothing wrong. Protecting the Adjucator is not a crime."

U-Nak said nothing and looked at the floor.

Ge-Mos was the one who answered.

"Yes, My friend, but killing one is. I'm sorry." He turned and left.

I looked at U-Nak. "The Adjucator was killed by a head wound, yes?"

He nodded, still silent.

"You, of all people, know how a lockgun works. If I had fired that at the Adjucator, there wouldn't be much of the stage left. You know that."

U-Nak looked at me then, looking hopeless. "I know, Tr-Ask, I know. But the Council needs someone to blame. They need a scapegoat. The Citadel is in turmoil. There have been several riots since you were brought here."

I was confused. " How long have I been laying here?"

"Several cycles. Just before you woke up, some Hellguards came in here and demanded that they take you to the Spire."

The Spire was the Grand Kai's throne room.

At that, a nurse drone hovered into the room. " Please vacate these premises." It said in a tinny, robotic voice. " The patient requires much rest. Leave immediately."

U-Nak quietly left.

FIVE

I waited in the infirmary room till well after dark. I could not sleep. There were too many thoughts going around in my head. Who would kill the Adjucator? Certainly not the Kai, for even in his rage he would not kill his own father. And why would they frame me, of all people?

Then it struck me.

Someone had bumped into me on my way out to the stage. Perhaps an accomplice of all this? He must have slipped the Lockgun onto my suit when he bumped into me.

There was a tapping at the Plasti-glass window. I looked over in time to see the window explode inward, sending glittering shards of moonlight over the room. Without a sound, three figures in power armor that was such a dark red it was almost black jumped into the room. They scanned around with their snub-nosed Phase Shifters before sighting on me. I hardly had time to cry out before darkness took me once again.

I woke up to find myself strapped spread-eagled onto a very hard and very cold board. I guessed that it was a moveable hospital surgery table, but propped up so I was vertical. In front of me, there was a Forerunner in an impossibly white and bright lab coat. His teal-green tail swished around, and he seemed very engrossed in whatever he was working on the table in front of me. It looked like â€|

I grunted. The Forerunner looked up from behind his tech-monocle.

He grinned a crocodilian grin, apparently pleased that I was awake. He put down the box-shaped thing, and then waved his slender scaly hands above his head.

"Ah! You are awake! Good good! I do not normally haveâ€|" He gestured

in the air. " How you sayâ€¦| _living_ patients. We have much work to do. Forerunner to see, things to do." His voice was animated, and he walked around the table with a bounce in his step. He pressed a button on the table I was strapped to, and the shackles opened. I fell to the floor.

"Oh. Sorry about that. You be more alert, yes?"

I grunted again and stood up. I realized I was shirtless, with only a pair of my zealot-issue dungarees to my person.

"Where am I?" I asked.

The Doctor looked annoyed. " You not know? Ah well. You will soon enough. Wait! Where are my manners? I am The Doctor Ti-Spark, at your service." He saluted with three scaled talons. I saluted back.

"You probably know who I am already, don't you." I said.

There was a glint in his eye. " Yes, I do. You are aâ€¦| very interesting specimen. Quite different from machinery, you see."

I looked back at his worktable. It was strewn with machinery parts and still-whirling little engines running off some unknown power source. And in the middle of it all, was a small blue box, about the size of my hand.

I pointed at it. "What's that? If you don't mind me asking," I said.

Ti-Spark nodded, as though he knew what I was going to say next.

"That is your partner, my friend." He walked over and picked up the box. He pressed several buttons on the back of it, and then tossed it into the air.

It didn't come back down.

The box floated in midair, a blue glow emanating from it. It flew around the room once, did a back flip, and then turned a jeweled eye to me. I could see the whirring machinery behind it.

"Greetings. I am 343 Guilty Spark, Monitor of this installation."

343's voice was metallic and lilting, one that I instantly found irritating.

"Oop!" cried the doctor, grabbing at the floating box. " Some things need not be introduced yet!"

He pressed some more buttons, and the box turned dull and silent once again.

"I thought we already had a monitor." I said, confused.

The Doctor nodded sadly. "We used to. It wasâ€¦| terminated in the last flood assault. I built new one! Is just like me, you see? My personality!"

The Doctor's way of talking, combined with all the interesting gadgets strewn around this white room, had distracted me. I returned to more pressing matters.

"So, Doctorâ€¦ Why am I here? I remembered some Hellguardsâ€¦"

Ti-Spark slapped his head. "Oh no! I almost forget! I take you to see Kai now. He is very interested in seeing you."

What would the Kai 'say' to the alleged murderer of his father? I instantly filled with apprehension.

"What if I don't want to go?" I said, testing the waters.

The Doctor shrugged. "Meh. You can go if you want. Not my problem."

I looked around for a door.

"Not my fault if you wanted for assassination of the Adjucator as well as the murder of five zealots. And breaking out of the prison hospital."

My blood turned to ice. "â€¦What?" I asked, slowly and patiently.

Ti-Spark looked at me. "The Adjucator's council wants you dead for various crimes against the Citadel."

"That I didn't commit. I wasn't even near five Zealots."

"That may be so, but it doesn't really matter to them. You are just fodder to calm the rioting masses. I heard things have gottenâ€¦messyâ€¦ out there." He gestured to the window.

"If I didn't kill the zealots, than that means that the Hellâ€¦"

"Enough jibber-jabber! I take you to see Kai now." He turned and strode away, fiddling with 343 as he did so.

SIX

The Spire was large, with long, vaulted corridors. Groups of Three Hellguards patrolled everywhere. As we walked, Ti-Spark began to whisper to me in a hoarse voice.

"I got special plan for you. The Kai is crazy. He wants to explode the ring, and not use the plan that we have installed. I do not agree with that at all."

His eyes glinted with a mischievous light. Within the fold of his lab coat, I could see a phase pistol. When he rounded a corner, he bumped into me suddenly.

"Oh! I very sorry, Tr-Ask! I am very clumsy. Forget me own head next!" he yelled loudly. As he did so, he transferred the phase pistol from his talons to mine. I hid it in the large coat I had

taken from the Lab.

Instantly, I realized who had bumped into me back at the amphitheater. The Doctor.

"Use it only in emergency. I am worried that the Kai might harm you a smidgen."

I nodded. We had arrived at the Spire Center. I took a deep breath.

"When you get out, shooting or not, come see me in my lab. I will help you." He pushed me into the Spire Chamber and then hurried off in his weird, lopsided walk.

I turned and addressed the darkness.

" Tr-Ask." It was not a greeting., more of an insult. Without warning, three hellguards came from behind me and forced me to my knees.

The Grand Kai stepped out into the pool of light in the center of the massive dark chamber. He was donned in a full suit of his powered armor. The helmet he held in his left hand.

His voice rang out. " So here stands the alleged murderer of my father."

He stepped nearer. His boots were permanently stained dark with Flood ichor from years of fighting off the raging hordes.

" You are innocent, however. I killed him myself." He raised my head level to his with one massive red gauntlet. " Though I am sad to tell you that this does not mean you will not suffer. The Council wants you dead. They want to calm the raging masses on the streets. It seems my father was very likeable."

He chuckled, at that.

"But you are not for them. I intend to find your body on the outskirts of the citadel. It seems, sadly, that you took your own life after assassinating the Adjucator."

He grinned that horrible dragon grin and threw me to the ground.

Gesturing at the Hellguards, he said, "Take him away and kill him. Bring him to me afterwards."

And then I was being dragged away into the dark corridors.

As they were dragging me, one to each side with the third bringing up the rear, making sure I didn't try anything, a thought popped into my head.

" Use only in an emergencyâ€¦|"

Well, this was a damn good time to use it then.

Moving swiftly and suddenly, I took the guards unawares. My fist

snapped up and caught the guard on my right side in the unarmored face.

He reeled back, releasing me, and I took that time to swing around and snap the neck of the guard to the left. He fell to the ground, hard, his armor making loud clanks as he fell.

I drew my phase pistol, then, and fired five glowing slugs into the Hellguard drawing his 'Shifter. The armor withstood the blows, but he staggered back a little, giving me time to put two rounds through the head of the other one. His head burst like a ripe melon.

He, too, fell down. The last Hellguard fired a volley of 'Shifter shots down the hall, but I was already gone, sprinting down the dimly lit hallways of the citadel with my coat billowing out behind me like a tattered sheet.

Behind me, somewhere, an alarm began.

SEVEN

As I ran through the corridors, I quickly realized that I was lost in an unknown complex of tunnels, with the entire squadron of Hellguards chasing after me.

As I rounded a corner, I nearly knocked over six Hellguards that were running the opposite way. I fired my pistol wildly into the mass of them, and then took off down a side corridor. 'Shifter shots chased me down the hall. One glowing blue shot clipped me in the left shoulder, making me cry out in pain. I stumbled, but managed to turn and sprint wildly down another corridor before they could catch up.

The thing about Phase Shifters is that the shots they fired were primarily designed to destroy Flood bodies, not fellow Forerunner. Even so, the hole in my shoulder oozed blood and stung like hell. My entire left arm was numb and useless.

Soon, all the corridors looked the same. My vision turned into a mess of swirling colors and alarm sirens. I ducked into an alcove near a large auditorium, and took that time to tear off a shred of my coat and wrapped it around my shoulder. It still stung, but at least I had stopped the bleeding.

After what seemed like an eternity I came across a door with the words " TECH LAB" inscribed on it in the blocky, squat runes of my kind. I threw the door open and stumbled inside.

Ti-Spark was waiting.

"I was worried that they got you!" he whispered, pulling me into a backroom with no windows. He took out a small tube filled with some greenish material, and plugged it into the wound on my shoulder. " Here, this medical foam should stop the pain and let you use that arm, if only for a little bit." he said.

I said nothing, only tried to calm my breathing speed enough to speak.

The Docotor hurriedly ran around his room. " Okay. I got a lot to

explain, and not enough time to get it done." He picked up a Holo-pad motioned for me to follow him. I did, saying, "Doctor. How can I trust you? I just killed two of my own kind in cold blood. And you are, after all, the Kai's advisor. You won't betray me?" And then, as an afterthought, added "And just what the bloody hell is going on here?"

Ti-Spark and I hurried down a red-lit corridor into something akin to a small armory. He grabbed five Phase Pistol clips and tossed them to me.

"An enemy would not arm you. Take these and go down this corridor. You need to find a way out of the Citadel. I can only guarantee you a way out of the Spire section. The rest is up to you."

"And what's down the corridor? More Hellguards?"

He looked at me then, as if betrayed. "No. Waiting for you in the private hangar is a Snapper. Take it and get away from here, fast. Take this, too." He pressed a small black Holo-Book into my hands. "Once you are safe, read it and follow the directions. I will meet you at the safe place. Now go, there is not much time."

He pushed me down the corridor. I hastily reloaded my phase pistol, saluted to the Doctor, and then closed the door behind me.

I was indeed inside a private hangar. All sorts of hovercars and private vehicles lined the large room.

In the middle was a small and sleek red hover-motorcycle. A Snapper, to use the civilian term. It was sitting in a laughably cliché pool of yellow light coming down from the lamp above. It was running.

I grinned, and jumped aboard the purring vehicle. I gunned the acceleration, and, with no sound except for a low humming, sped off down the tunnel that connected to the highway.

I was still speeding down the tunnel when five Sentinels came hovering down from a hole in the ceiling. Orange laser beams streaked towards my bike as I drove down the tunnel. None hit, luckily, and I raced by all five of them. They silently began to give chase.

My coat blew out behind me in the wind. More orange streaks raced toward me, but all fell short once again.

Suddenly, the dim red-lit tunnel gave way to the open air of the Citadel in the morning light. I rode down the road connecting to the main transport road. I was dismayed to see it was extremely busy, and packed with hover-vehicles of all kinds and sizes.

More sentinels came out from nowhere and pursued me, as well as two red Hoverbikes that raced out of the tunnel after me. I could see the Hellguards mounted on them.

They both pulled out phase pistols and drove with one hand. Looking back, I could see both of them were gaining on me fast. Thinking fast and suicidal, I deliberately swerved my bike out from the road and into the incoming traffic. I only narrowly dodged several vehicles and their panicked drivers.

The freeway opened up into an enormous bridge that spanned across the whole of the Citadel. With an electric SNZRRRRYT at least seven phase pistol shots flew toward me. I felt my bike shudder as some shots thudded into it. I kept my bearing, though, and continued to dodge traffic as my bike sped up even further.

Eventually, after blowing one Sentinel to bits with my own pistol, I ramped my bike up onto the curb of the bridge, and down onto the lower road beneath it. The Sentinels followed, but suddenly the road I was on veered away from the main bridge. The Hellguards panicked as they were forced to stay on the road that was going against traffic.

I saw one of them try to swerve and avoid a speeding hovertruck, but he clipped the girders lining the edge of the bridge. The truck plowed over his bike with the sound of screeching metal.

The resulting explosion lit up the morning as I sped away, toward the outskirts of the Citadel.

EIGHT

The orange laser beams of the sentinels continue to follow me as I turned off the highway and into the slum district. I managed to destroy another one as it flew in close to me, apparently ready for the killing beam.

The last solitary sentinel's lasers raked over the bike and myself. The bike jerked as the beam melted the rear engine into itself.

I jumped off at the last instant, and landed extremely awkwardly on the asphalt-ish ground. The impact made my bones rattle, and my shoulder wound began to sting and bleed once again as the medical foam jarred loose and disintegrated.

The bike ran into the building directly in front of me, and turned into a growing ball of flame. I rolled clear of the explosion and took a careful bead on the sentinel.

I fired three times. The hovering drone bucked and fell, and hit the ground with a resounding crack.

I reloaded, and then noticed that that was the last clip I had. I sighed. "How did you get into the mess?" I asked myself. "Where did it start?"

I looked around. I was in the Junk District of the slums. Most of the heavy industry was centered here. That meansâ€¦|

I set off south, towards the Citadel Wall and the trackless wilderness beyond.

I had to evade searching Sentinel squadrons three times. By then it was nearly midday, and the bustling activity in the Junk District was enough to hide me. The Sentinels did not find me.

I found an abandoned factory near the Citadel Wall. As I went inside and sat on a pile of rubble, I realized I had not eaten anything since before the Adjucator's speech. I decided to take a chance and stepped outside to look for a street side food vendor.

After all, I told myself, word of my escape from the Spire probably hasn't reached the street yet. They want to keep it as quiet as possible.

I tentatively walked toward a cart sporting a pot of steaming _Plom, _a type of stew made from plants and water. I bought a cup full of it and walked away, devouring it. It was salty and warm, and hit the spot. I sat down back inside the factory, and closed my eyes.

I opened them again. The bustling street had changed to quiet and gloomy road. It was dark out.

I stood up, groggily. "I must have fallen asleep," I thought, and stepped outside. The cool night air caressed my face. The planet this installation was orbiting glowed brightly in the night. I continued to walk toward the Wall. Nothing was left for me here in the Citadel anyway. I was branded a heretic and an assassin.

It was very dark when I reached the security checkpoint. Because of the Citadel being self-contained, there was very little reason to leave the safety of these gigantic walls. Only the military and special organizations ever did it. No one really knew how much of the wilderness the Flood had infested, but there was the danger of a Flood attack anytime you were outside the Citadel.

The checkpoint was a huge gate composed of two sliding doors. The doors looked big enough to fit the entire Council room in between them. In front of the gate stood a powered down hover tank, and at least seven Snappers in the customary gray of the Forerunner military. I could see two guards standing outside the gate, but there might be more inside the small, squat gatehouse nearby the gates.

2. Ending Segment One

I drew my pistol and stealthily walked forward, towards my destiny.

End
file.